



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

AOT's fiscal year 2008 Marketing Plan and Programs Guide ([MPPG](#)) is now available online at www.azot.gov under the Plans, Reports and Calendars section of the business-to-business Web site. This guide offers detailed information about AOT's marketing plans for FY08, including trade shows and sales missions, advertising opportunities and grant application deadlines. We will continue to make updates to the information as more plans are confirmed so you have AOT's most up-to-date information available. Please take some time to review the information within the MPPG. This is a great tool to help create your destination marketing plan.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2008

The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for FY08 are now

available. The primary objective of this competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects in rural communities throughout the State. The funding amount for FY08 is \$550,000. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. Applications are available on AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov under the Grants section. Applications must be received by the Arizona Office of Tourism no later than 5 p.m. Thursday, August, 30, 2007. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Karen McClurg, Tourism Education and Development Manager at kmccclurg@azot.gov or by phone at 602-364-3708.

Arizona Well Featured by International Tour Operators

AOT targets international travelers from the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Japan and Germany (including German-speaking Austria and Switzerland) and has in-market representatives in all countries. Every year the international representatives complete an inventory of all tour operators in their market who offer product in Arizona. In addition to the countries where we have representation, AOT also commissions product inventories from developing and potential markets. These inventories are an important tool in helping us develop our future marketing strategy.

- **France** – This is the second year AOT has commissioned a French product inventory and Arizona is currently featured by 70 tour operators, six of which are on-line companies. This is an increase of 11 percent compared to 2006.
- **Italy** – This is the first year that AOT has completed an Italian product inventory, so there is no comparison to previous years, however, Arizona is well featured and is currently offered by 81 Italian operators.

These product inventories, along with UK, Germany, Mexico, Canada and Japan are available for \$75 each. For more information please contact Loretta Belonio at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lblonio@azot.gov.

Trippin' with AOT

Register Now for the 10th Annual Arizona Showcase in Hermosillo

The Arizona Office of Tourism will hold the 10th Annual Arizona Showcase October 3-4, 2007 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. This event promotes fall and holiday shopping, attractions and accommodations throughout the Grand Canyon State. This year there will be a special emphasis on weddings. The first night of the event will be a trade show for travel agents and media representatives. The second night of the event will highlight a charity fashion show with local models – specifically targeting high income families and individuals with a strong propensity to travel. The cost to participate varies from \$800–\$2,000 depending on type of supplier and level of participation, plus travel expenses. Sponsorships are also available. The deadline to participate is September 1, 2007. Early booking discounts apply. Please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at kswanson@azot.gov.

Industry News

\$100M Inbound Tourism Bill Introduced in House

If a bill introduced Tuesday in the House is passed, the U.S. government will launch for the first time a \$100 million marketing campaign to encourage inbound tourism. The Travel Promotion Act of 2007 (HR 3232) is co-sponsored by Reps. William Delahunt, D-Mass., and Roy Blunt, R-Mo. It mirrors similar legislation now pending in the Senate. The bill would establish a public-private entity that would work with the Department of Commerce to develop the promotional campaign. The \$100 million promotion fund would be financed partly by contributions from the private sector and by a \$10 fee paid by travelers from the participating countries in the Visa Waiver Program. Introduction of the legislation drew praise from the Travel Industry Association, Travel Business Roundtable and the Discover America Partnership. (*Travel Weekly.com; Special to TA*)

Hotel Bars Not Just for Happy Hour Anymore

Hotel bars, once seen as the province of weary businessmen at the end of the day, are being remodeled, updated and given expanded food and drink menus as chains begin to realize how much money they can make. "A lot of work is done in bars," says Larry Cerci, an executive from Nyack, N.Y., who travels often and finds the bars a good place to interact with colleagues or clients. "It's not all about the happy hour," he said. The renaissance in bars is in large part about attracting more and different customers, including women. (*Page C8, New York Times*)

Hotels Pump Up the Volume with Meeting Themes

Hotels are no longer selling corporate meeting clients just a room, a sound system, a projector and some pitchers of water. Some full-service chains are in the vanguard of a growing trend in which the hotels are creating a customized environment that uses sound, food, scent, decor, toys and gadgets to create moods that match the meetings' objectives. Kimpton Hotels began its Signature Meetings initiative last year reports USA Today. Omni launched a similar campaign – dubbed Sensational Meetings – earlier this year. The W and Westin also customize meetings. Kimpton executive Christine Lawson says meeting organizers can't expect good results when participants are thrown into a drab room with bad air and eat nothing but sugar and carbohydrates. "We're telling customers not to be afraid to infuse creativity." For example, a client wishing to hammer out a financial deal might opt for an environment that eases tension. That could call for low lighting, green tea, worry stones on tables and a relaxed mix of instrumental music. Those wishing to generate team-building and brainstorm for new projects might consider a joint cooking session, bowls of almonds (reputed to be brain food) and even board games. Barbara Scofidio, editor of trade publication Corporate Meetings & Incentives, says meeting planners are increasingly willing to pay extra for anything that will keep participants awake, set a mood, stir creativity and generate more "return on investment" for what companies spend on meetings.

Survey: Destination Loyalty Drives Vacation Decisions

Destination loyalty drives the majority of decisions about where to go on vacation according to a new 2007 telephone survey conducted for the U.S. Tour Operators Association. A full two-thirds (66 percent) of 1,000 consumers polled said that place is the most important factor when planning a vacation says TravelDailyNews. Price and value are also important elements, but for this majority group, they tend to be considered after the destination decision has been made. The largest group of respondents, 35 percent, said they choose a destination first and then shop for the best value. Another 19 percent reported that they travel to the destination they want, regardless of price and value; and 12 percent said that they shop for the best value among several preferred destinations. Only 16 percent of respondents said that they shopped for the lowest price before choosing a destination. When it comes to where to go on vacation, people tend to prefer returning to destinations they like. Nearly a third of Americans polled (31 percent) said they typically repeat favorite vacation spots, but sometimes try new destinations. Another quarter (22 percent) said they stick to a few tried and true places. The numbers are slightly lower for those who

continually seek new experiences. About a quarter (24 percent) of those polled reported that they typically explore new places, but occasionally return to a favorite destination. Far fewer, 16 percent, indicated that they usually seek a new destination with each vacation. Survey findings also revealed that increased income correlates strongly with the desire to repeat favorite destinations.

Planners Willing to go off Season if Price is Right

How willing are planner's bosses to hold meetings during a destination's off-season? It turns out they are reasonably amenable to the idea, even though the example used was Phoenix in August or Michigan in February – not exactly premier sites at that time of year. In the latest poll on MiMegasite.com, 37 percent of respondents said they would be "very willing" to go to a destination off-season in return for a great experience at a great price. Nearly half or 48 percent said their bosses would be "somewhat willing, but would need to be persuaded." Only 14 percent said bosses would be "not at all willing." "Four- and five-star properties in locations with harsh summers or winters will often have off-season meeting packages for under \$200 per person per night, which include: accommodations; meeting space; two refreshment breaks; and either breakfast or lunch," says MiMegasite, adding: "And for attendees who rarely get to stay at such properties, the event will be memorable and will likely boost morale." (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter*)